

What is GONORRHEA?

Gonorrhea (pronounced *Gone-o-rhee-ah*), sometimes called the clap or drip is a bacterial infection. People get gonorrhea by having vaginal, anal, or oral sex with a person who's infected with this disease.

Gonorrhea is a very common infectious disease. It is estimated that more than 700,000 persons in the U.S. get new gonorrheal infections each year. Most are under the age of 25. Teenagers are especially likely to get this infection. It is important that all of your sex partners get treated, so that you do not become re-infected with gonorrhea.

HOW TO TELL If You Have Gonorrhea

Almost all men (95%) with gonorrhea will develop symptoms within three to five days after having sex with someone who is infected. However, symptoms can show up within one day or take as long as a month.

Most women (60-80%) who have gonorrhea **do not** show any symptoms. Those who do, usually develop symptoms within 10-days of having sex with their infected partner.

For both men and women, gonorrhea in the throat or rectum usually does not result in any symptoms at all.

Symptoms in Men

- ▶ A small-to-large amount of yellow or greenish colored discharge from the penis that looks like pus
- ▶ Painful and frequent urination (peeing)
- ▶ The head of the penis may be sore and swollen

Symptoms in Women

- ▶ A discharge from the vagina
- ▶ Bleeding between periods
- ▶ Painful urination (peeing)
- ▶ A low-grade fever and nausea (sick to the stomach)
- ▶ Pain in the lower abdomen (stomach) or lower back

WHAT CAN HAPPEN If You Don't Get Treatment

- ▶ For both men and women, untreated gonorrhea can cause infertility (i.e., being unable to have children).
- ▶ In women, gonorrhea can cause Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). More than 100,000 women are treated for PID every year in the United States. PID occurs when gonorrhea spreads up into the pelvic cavity and damages the fallopian tubes.
- ▶ If the tubes are damaged from the infection and the woman becomes pregnant, the egg might grow outside the uterus (womb). This can be dangerous to a mother's life.
- ▶ Gonorrhea can get into the bloodstream and cause skin and heart problems, as well as arthritis.
- ▶ A pregnant woman who has gonorrhea can miscarry (i.e., lose the baby) in the first three months of pregnancy.
- ▶ During childbirth, a woman who has gonorrhea can pass the disease to her baby, many of these babies may suffer from eye infections.
- ▶ If a pregnant woman doesn't get treatment for gonorrhea, the disease can cause premature (i.e., early) birth. Babies can also be born dead.

HOW TO FIND OUT If You Have Gonorrhea

The only way you can know for sure if you have gonorrhea is to visit a doctor or clinic and be tested for it. The physician/nurse may provide a genital exam and a lab test. Testing is usually quick, painless, and inexpensive. Here's how it's done:

- ▶ For both men and women, a urine specimen may be collected or secretions can be collected from the throat and/or rectum; or

- ▶ For men, a thin swab is inserted into the open end of the penis. The swab soaks-up fluid present there for testing;
- ▶ For women, a swab is inserted into the vagina to remove fluids for testing.

GETTING RID Of Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is easily cured by taking antibiotics. Some strains of gonorrhea, however, are resistant to usual treatment and require a shot of a non-penicillin based antibiotic to get rid of it.

Often, people who have gonorrhea also have another sexually-transmitted disease (STD) such as chlamydia and may need to be treated for it at the same time as well.

Tips For Successful Treatment

- ▶ Follow the directions and take all of your medicine.
- ▶ Take all of the medicine given to you, even if the symptoms disappear!
- ▶ Have your sex partners get treated at the same time you are, otherwise you may re-infect each other.
- ▶ Have no sex for 7-10 days after you've finished taking all your medicine.
- ▶ To be sure you're cured, have a follow-up exam 3-4 weeks after you finish your medicine.

HOW TO REDUCE Your Chances Of Getting A STD

- ▶ Latex condoms (rubbers). Although condoms don't offer 100% protection, if properly used they may protect you from getting gonorrhea and other STDs. Both men and women should carry and use condoms.
- ▶ Talk with your partner about using condoms. Using condoms every time you have sex is the best way to avoid most STDs.

- ▶ Spermicides like nonoxynol-9 do **NOT** prevent STD/HIV infections and should be used for pregnancy prevention **ONLY**.
- ▶ Keep a clear head. Alcohol and drugs affect the choices you make.
- ▶ Look for symptoms. If you or any of your sex partners have a discharge or sore, don't have sex until you're checked for a STD by a doctor or clinic.
- ▶ Talk to your partner about their sexual history and STD/HIV testing.

AND FINALLY...

If you've been told that you have gonorrhea, anyone you've had sex with in the last 60-days may also be infected. Remember, even if there are no symptoms, a person can still be infected. Getting early treatment is important!

If you feel uncomfortable about telling your sex partners about this, ask for help from the clinic where you were treated. They can provide information to the state health department and arrange for your partners to be told confidentially about their exposure to gonorrhea. Your name will **never** be given to those partners.

**For more information, call:
STD HOTLINE
800-228-0254**